Women in Church Leadership: Raising the Awareness of Women's Contributions to the Kingdom of God in the Christian Reformed Church

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Abstract
The official position of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) is that all congregations in the CRCNA may allow women to serve in the offices of minister, elder, deacon, or commissioned pastor. The problem is that 70 percent of the congregations remain convicted complementarians and do not call women into office. The debate over the biblical, historical, theological, philosophical, and ethical arguments for allowing women into leadership positions has so far failed to convince those 70 percent who are opposed to the idea.

In the Reformed tradition, the Word is principally taught with expository preaching. Doctrine is paramount. Women's stories are not being heard in the CRCNA. This is tragic since all through history there is an enormous amount of evidence supporting women in leadership. The thesis of this paper is that as men and women discover the stories of women in the Bible and history, they will come to the realization that women should be included in all levels of ministry in the church.

This dissertation seeks to promote the status of women in the Christian Reformed Church of North America. Section One describes the background of the problem and gives definitions for the key concepts in the debate concerning women in leadership positions. Section Two outlines the history of the debate over whether or not women may be called to an office in the Christian Reformed Church. A synopsis of proposed solutions by the CRCNA and other denominations is explored. Key qualifications and arguments are outlined with an analysis and summary. Section Three offers as a hypothesis that the telling of women's stories will help prove that God's design for the church includes the equality of men and women. Sections Four and Five describe an artifact that will promote the solution: a website for showcasing the stories of women in the Bible and history. Section Six offers a summary of this author's efforts, including the choice of artifact, personal lessons, and suggestions for further research.

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Christianity - Christianity - Church and society: The development of Christianity's influence on the character of society since the Reformation has been twofold. In the realm of state churches and territorial churches, Christianity contributed to the preservation of the status quo of society. In England the Anglican church remained an ally of the throne, as did the Protestant churches of the German states. In Russia the Orthodox church continued to support a social order founded upon the monarchy, and even the monarch carried out a leading function within the church as protector. Though the im Our women are educated, they're not considered property, and they're permitted positions of authority in the public sphere. And we’re not the first-century Church. And that’s okay. God doesn’t call us to be a first-century Church. In today’s culture, does limiting or restricting the roles of women in church leadership negatively or positively affect the spread of the Gospel? Or, in the words of Biblical scholar Scot McKnight, “Do you think Paul would have put women ‘behind the pulpit’ if it would have been advantageous ‘for the sake of the Gospel’?” (For the record, it’s estimated between 80–85% of single missionaries on the field today are women). Do you accuse divorced women of adultery for remarrying? The lay women of our church and other Christian denominations are faced with the burdensome paradox of being called to spread the gospel with equal sincerity on the one hand and having that spirit of devotion and commitment curbed on the other. For a segment of them the special gifts of communication, of clarity of speech, of insight and administrative and leadership capabilities seem to be an even more paradoxical blessing. role of women in spreading the gospel and ministering to the Christian church community.

Secondly it will attempt to show how these principles of service were put into operation in the early church by describing the historical.